vated, whereby the input devices 3 and 4 are placed under the control of the input virtualizing module. Other members than the host user select the interlocution control menu and then select the participation 71A, whereupon the virtual input receiving module 400 is set to the state to wait for the request for establishment of the interlocution control route or path 70. The host user selects the member designation 71B and then specifies the partner(s), whereby the request for establishment of the interlocution control route is issued to the partner work station(s). Thus, the interlocution control route 70 is established between the work stations. When more than two members, inclusive, participate in the conference, the partner members are designated sequentially. Upon complete establishment of the control route or path 70, the frame color or background color of the control window A60 is changed. Thus, the user can recognize that the interlocution is ready.

When the host user selects from the material or document list 73 one document for the interlocution which is to be distributed to the member(s), there makes appearance within the interlocution control window A60 the command menu shown in FIG. 10D. Further, an application program corresponding to the specified document is activated. Owing to the function of this application program, a part of the content of the material or document is displayed within a new window on the display screen. When the host user selects the distribution command 73A from the command menu, the data constituting the document mentioned above is transmitted to the other work station(s). At that time, the distribution of the document is memorized in the table adapted to manage the menu 70, whereby the color of the icon indicating the document distributed can be changed when the menu 70 is displayed next time. In this state, the host user may input the joint use command. Then, the document display window is set to the interlocution window mode with the color of that window being changed so as to be discriminated from the other local windows. Since the joint use command is transmitted to the partner work station(s), the document window is set to the interlocution window mode also in the partner work station(s).

When the user creates a document in one window on the display screen for the joint use, the created document is then associated with the interlocution control window A60 or B60 to be placed under the control of the interlocution control program. Thereafter, the operation described above is performed. Since the control menu 70 corresponds to one interlocution control program, a plurality of documents or materials may simultaneously be used as the objects for the interlocution provided that they are registered in the document list 73.

When the joint use stop command is issued concerning the document or material which has already been the object for interlocution, the joint use mode is released, whereupon the work station can be restored to the individual use mode. At that time, the color of the window displaying the material and that of the material representing an icon are changed to identify the individual use mode discriminatively from the joint use mode.

When the leave command 71C is inputted in one of the work stations in the course of the conference or interlocution, the interlocution control route to the one work station is deleted. In case the interlocution is to be ended, the host user inputs the material recovery command 73D for the specified material or document. This command 73D is transmitted to the other work station(s), whereby the distributed document can be deleted from the registration. Upon inputting of the end command 72A, all the interlocution control paths between or among the stations make disappearance.

By providing preparatorily a plurality of sets of the control menus and the interlocution control programs in each of the work station according to the teachings of the invention, the plural interlocution control programs may be caused to run simultaneously in one station so that one user can participate simultaneously in plural conferences realized by different combinations of the work stations, respectively.

As will be appreciated from the foregoing description, the interlocution communication system or joint information processing system provided by the present invention allows a variety of programs used currently to run on a plurality of work stations (computers) in the similar manner. Further, by using the system together with the telephones, various information can be instantly processed by making use of the voice and data between the distant locations while viewing the information. The result of the processing can instantly be presented to all the participants.

In the work station imparted with the multiwindow function according to the teaching of the invention, decision as to whether a given one of the windows is to be used for the joint operation with the other work station can be made at any time. Of course, the work station can be used individually or independently and can straightforwardly enter the joint information processing, as occasion requires.

What is claimed is:

1. An interlocution communication method carried out in a communication system including a plurality of stations connected to a communication network, wherein each of said stations has a multi-window control function for creating a plurality of windows on a display screen including an interlocution control window for inputting commands, said method comprising:

a step of establishing a control communication route between interlocution control programs running on first and second stations by inputting predetermined commands through at least one of said interlocution control windows created in the display screen of said first and second stations;

a step of creating a first window for working a first application program in the display screen of said first station and creating a second window for working a second application program in the display screen of said second station, said first and second application programs having the same function to produce the same processing results in response to the same input;

a step of establishing on said control communication route a logical communication path for interlocking said first window of said first station and said second window of said second station by sending a first control command from the interlocution control program of said first station to the interlocution control program of said second station by way of said control communication route when an instruction to operate said first window in an interlocution mode is inputted through said interlocution control window of said first station;

a step of inputting data or a command for said first or second application program to said first or second window at one of said first and second stations;